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List of Acronyms & Glossary

DRSP	Direction Régionale de la Santé Publique
Ecole des Maris	Approach developed by UNFPA and used by a number of NGOs in Niger
FFP	Office of Food for Peace
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FY	Fiscal Year
GoN	Government of Niger
HKI	Helen Keller International
INRAN	National Institute of Agronomy Research
LLVC	Livestock Value Chain Coordinators
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

A. Introduction: Annual Food Assistance Program Results

During fiscal year (FY) 2013, significant progress was made under the USAID-funded Sawki DFAP Program. Through two interconnected strategic objectives, *Sawki* is designed to respond to the food security needs of more than 106,000 beneficiaries based on criteria of social vulnerability, economic opportunities and agro-pastoral linkages. Over the course of FY2013, the first implementation year, the *Sawki* team was extensively focused on essential start up activities (such as securing partnership agreements, hiring staff, finalizing facilities arrangements, etc.), particularly through May 2013, while USAID/FFP-contractor, ICF Macro, was conducting the baseline study for the program. This Annual Results Report focuses on key accomplishments and results of the Sawki program, outlining first, beneficiary selection; second, results by Strategic Objective; third, accomplishments on the monitoring and evaluation plan; and finally, results on operational issues including commodities management and monetization. The Annual Results Report concludes with lessons learned from the past year.

Results and Accomplishments during Year 1 / FY2013: Beneficiary and Community Selection

A fundamental Year 1 activity was the careful selection of communities and beneficiaries. At program inception, *Sawki* had initially planned to reach 106,000 individuals in 75 villages. The population data collected by ICF Macro during the first 2013 calendar quarter and the beneficiaries screening subsequently conducted by the *Sawki* team revealed a very large difference in the number of households in the pre-selected villages compared to the population data used during the proposal design phase. Due to resource constraints, this difference in population size forced the *Sawki* team to reduce the number of target communities to 62, which results in 92,092 targeted beneficiaries. The 62 villages, divided between three communes in Maradi (21 communities) and five in Zinder (41 communities), were selected for their chronic food insecurity, high rates of chronic malnutrition, human and economic potential, contiguity and strong community cohesion. These areas are also easily accessible in all seasons.

Once communities were identified, *Sawki* proceeded with beneficiary selection in 11 villages in Maradi (commune of Guidan Roumdji) and 15 in Zinder (commune of Droum). In priority, *Sawki* identified food recipients, including: pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and children under 2 years of age, adolescent girls, leader mothers and community health promoters. All identified beneficiaries received their printed food distribution cards. The LMMS for which equipment is already in place, will be ready for deployment following commodity staff training by World Vision in November 2013. At that time, new cards with bar codes will be provided to each individual food beneficiary. 560 participants in farmer field schools (FFS), 175 women garden coordinators were also identified and placed in activity groups in each target community. Through a thorough door to door household survey conducted in March-April for Year 1 villages and August for Year 2 villages, *Sawki* identified a total of 92,092 individuals (49% women) in 13,973 households, including: 2,369 pregnant women, 1,793 lactating women, and 7,704 children under the age of 2.

Results and Accomplishments during Year 1 / FY2013, by Objective

SO1: Reduce chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five, with an emphasis on children under two

IR 1.1: Appropriate nutrition practices during a child's first 1,000 days adopted by pregnant women, mothers and caretakers

Disseminating ENA Practices – A training of trainers on the seven essential nutrition actions (ENA) took place in May-June 2013 in both regions. Using the Ministry of Public Health's ENA training modules, *Sawki* trained 11 senior technical staff from the Direction Régionale de la Santé Publique (DRSP) (regional health department) and District-level health officials from Maradi and Zinder. Following these trainings, *Sawki* and District-level health officials trained 38 health center and health post agents, in two trainings, in Maradi in Zinder. In addition to communication techniques around ENA, these trainings addressed communication around nutrition and malnutrition, and introduced the concept of care units and care groups¹ to be used by the *Sawki* program.

In the 26 villages where beneficiary identification took place in Year 1, *Sawki* and district-level health agents trained 29 community health promoters and 302 leader mothers in ENA during three days. In each village, a care group comprised of 10 to 15 leader mothers was formed (with three villages counting two care groups) with each leader mother assisting 15 PLW. In each village, care groups are supervised by a community health promoter, selected by the community. In addition to ENA training, leader mothers and health promoters have participated in monthly sessions on social behavior change and community awareness building, although the visual and audio aids for the latter have are not available from UNICEF. In the absence of standardized materials, *Sawki*, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, is developing appropriate materials that will be duplicated and distributed in November 2013 to the health promoters and leader mothers for their use with PLW, after validation by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF. To support and monitor leader mothers and health promoters in their activities, *Sawki* is working on a protocol with the health district officials for quarterly follow up visits.

Sawki started food distribution to PLW and children under 2 in July 2013. Each beneficiary received a two-month ration at each distribution. All 26 villages from Year 1 received their two-month rations, but the 11 villages in Maradi also received a second two-month ration. In total, 1,640 PLW and 3,101 children under 2 have received rations to date. Year 2 villages will start receiving their two-month rations in October 2013. In parallel, *Sawki* health agents have carried out cooking demonstrations with CSB+ in 24 of the 26 Year1 villages, during food distributions; while leader mothers have also started cooking demonstrations in their villages using local food items.

Sawki also began forming Year 2 care units and care groups, and all groups should be formed by the end of November 2013. Leader mothers and health promoters from Year 1 villages will receive their first food rations (for 3 months) in November. Also in process at the end of the

¹ A care unit is a grouping of 10 to 15 PLW. Each care unit designates one leader mother. A care group is a grouping of 10 to 15 leader mothers. One or several care groups are supervised by one community health promoter.

reporting period is the formation of Ecoles des Maris (husband schools) in all villages, with activities for these groups planned to begin in November, to be completed the following month.

In Year 1, a partnership was established with Dimagi² to test the CommCare mobile application in certain *Sawki* villages, to disseminate health information to target audiences, and facilitate health promoters' data collection on health and nutrition status of children under the age of five through Lead Mothers, starting in Year 2. Data collection has begun in other villages using conventional methods.

The following activities are due to commence in Year 2:

Expanding acceptance and adoption of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies; Increasing access to potable water; Implementing community-led total sanitation (CLTS); and Strategies Promoting New Technologies to Reduce Women and Girls' Workloads.

IR 1.2: Appropriate nutrition practices and healthy timing of first pregnancy adopted by adolescent girls and their partners

Sensitization Campaign – *Sawki* has informed community leaders of this upcoming activity and has coordinated with them the selection of adolescent girl mentors (see next activity). Planning for the campaign and the identification of community “bright spots” will take place starting November 2013.

“Safe Spaces” Discussions for Girls- With support from the Girl Effect University funded by the Nike Foundation, *Sawki* partners and key governmental agriculture and health counterparts from Maradi and Zinder participated in a training workshop in March 2013 on targeting and implementation of activities for adolescent girls. Beyond this workshop, the Girl Effect University remains engaged with *Sawki*, through the 2013 calendar year, through monthly ‘coaching calls’ with the *Sawki* Gender Advisor.

With these new skills, *Sawki* established 53 safe spaces in 26 villages in Year 1, which include 1,394 adolescent girls supported by 117 adolescent girl mentors. These mentors, usually slightly older than the girls they mentor, were trained early September by the *Sawki* team and Girl Effect University on how to create a safe and supportive environment for adolescent girls, how to promote teamwork and team spirit, how to use participatory facilitation techniques and gain confidence speaking to groups, and finally, how to discuss nutrition and family planning with adolescent girls. Similar trainings will take place for mentors identified in the remaining villages, at the end of the calendar year.

The following activity is due to commence in Year 2: *Family Planning and On-Demand Contraception for Young Couples.*

² *Dimagi* is a social enterprise that makes open source software to improve healthcare in developing countries and for the underserved. <http://www.dimagi.com/>

IR 1.3: Counseling and care appropriately provided by health centers and other community actors

Health facility staff delivery high quality service and messages for ENA, family planning and Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) – Nothing to report. This activity will commence in Year 2/ FY2014.

Increasing outreach services in nutrition and family planning – In order to increase outreach services on family planning through peer educators (an activity planned for Year 2), *Sawki* is working with UNFPA to design this activity.

Establishing an active screening and referral system for malnutrition at the community level – While this activity is planned for Year 2, the *Sawki* team has compiled an inventory of anthropometric equipment needed in all 26 villages identified in Year 1 and found that none have growth monitoring equipment available at the community level. As such equipment is necessary for active screening of malnutrition; *Sawki* is exploring venues for acquiring this equipment, through UNICEF.

To support the referral system for malnutrition, it was initially planned to provide food aid to the health centers. After further consultation with the DRSP however, it was determined that health centers were sufficiently provisioned in CSB Plus and vegetable oil through the World Food Programme. *Sawki* therefore revised the commodity pipeline with its PREP submission and the 30 metric tons of vegetable oil initially planned for the health centers will be distributed for Food for Work activities instead.

Supporting the National and Regional Governmental Health Services' Organization and Communication Efforts – As described under IR1.1, nutrition focal points from within the regional governmental health services were trained in ENA and communication techniques.

SO2: Local availability and households' access to nutritious food increased

To foster community ownership over program activities, *Sawki* emphasized a participatory approach to mobilize communities, with the participation of all community stakeholders including the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock's decentralized technical services. Through a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), *Sawki* identified constraints facing the agriculture and livestock sectors in the target regions and proposed solutions. All social groups were included in the RRA (men, women and youth). *Sawki* subsequently organized local agro-pastoral producer groups for gardening and herd management activities in particular. These are inclusive groups with a complaint committee put in place in each village.

IR 2.1: Household consumption of diversified nutritious food increased from agricultural and pastoral production

Enhanced Household Food Production – In light of women's low land ownership and access, especially for arable land, *Sawki* conducted advocacy towards village leaders and husbands through plenary sessions, to allow women to access plots of land for vegetable gardening activities. Irrigated crop production will be used both at the individual women household plots

and communal field production sites. In each Year 1 village, *Sawki* organized one or more gardening groups of 10 to 15 women, headed by a Garden Coordinator for each group. In total, 175 women garden coordinators in 38 sites will group 2,644 women at the end of Year 1 (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 : Garden Coordinators

Communes	Number of sites	Number of women groups	Total number of members
Guidan Roundji (Maradi)	5	25	394
Mirriah (Zinder)	33	150	2250
Total	38	175	2644

Garden Coordinators, trained by the Department of Agriculture, provide technical assistance to their groups, and will manage seed nurseries using irrigation. Further trainings are planned in Year 2 for Garden Coordinators. Crops currently cultivated in the 15 gardens under irrigation are vegetables,³ tubers orange flesh sweet potato and Irish potato, and Moringa.

In Year 1, *Sawki* procured orange-flesh sweet potato from Burkina Faso (*varieties procured: Caromex440136, Tiébélé2 and Jewel*), the distribution of which will take place in October after the production of cuttings by INRAN. In addition to the distribution of cuttings, educational sessions on the nutritional value of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes will be conducted in all villages. Producing cuttings is underway and under the control of INRAN.

Sawki has signed an MoU with local institution INRAN for the production and scale up of major agricultural products promoted by the program and to develop the storage and processing of agricultural products at the community level (activity below). As such, *Sawki* no longer plans to work with the World Vegetable Center/AVRDC for these program activities.

Micronutrient-Rich Product Processing and Conservation – Nothing to report this year, as activity will begin in Year 2 / FY2014.

IR 2.2: Land and livestock productivity increased at household and community levels

Efficiently Managing Soil & Water Resources – One of the first steps to improving management of soil and water resources, is understanding the constraints to farm productivity. To do so, the *Sawki* team, INRAN and community members conducted a community-level diagnosis of specific agricultural constraints, identified the crops the communities would like to increase production on, and issued recommendations to farmers for more productive agricultural practices.

INRAN trained seven *Sawki* field agents and eight Ministry of Agriculture's technical agents as Master Trainers through three courses, each taught over three days, in: approach and hands-on implementation of Farmer Field Schools (FFS); improved crop protection (including alternative control methods against pests); and safety precautions in the use of pesticides and other chemicals. By the end of the agricultural campaign, *Sawki* noted gains in time in the agricultural

³ Carrots, cabbage, onion, tomato, lettuce

calendar, efficiency of alternative pest control methods (e.g. use of neem juice, bag release for biological control, delaying sowing), and improved integrated natural resources management for soil fertilization.

In Year 1, 25 FFS were established, including three women-only groups, on a total of approximately 20 hectares planted with millet and/or cowpeas. Each FFS consists of 20 to 25 members with an overall average of 51% of women participants (see Table 2 for gender breakdown). While Sawki promoted mixed groups, some women requested women only groups.

Table 2: Gender breakdown of Year 1 FFS

Region	Number of FFS	Number of Men	Number of Women	Total
Maradi	14	165	175	340
Zinder	11	110	110	220
Total	25	275	285	560

FFS are established in communities where communities agree to provide land (on average half a hectare) for demonstration, and where the community commits to actively participate in the management of the field. Weekly meetings, facilitated by one of the eight trained governmental extension agent, are held at each FFS throughout the three-month growing season (from soil preparation to harvest). It is during these meetings that all lessons on best production practices and crop protection are discussed. The FFS also benefit from regular support and monitoring visits by the *Sawki* team and INRAN. The GoN technical agriculture agents, who were also trained by INRAN, conduct support visits with logistical support from *Sawki*.

In total, 560 farmers have received the different trainings mentioned earlier. Further trainings, learning events and activities to develop irrigation are planned in Year 2.

Enhancing Animal Fertility and Milk Production – At the end of Year 1, *Sawki* launched a mapping of training needs for livestock service providers, in collaboration with the governmental services. Based on the findings from this mapping, trainings will be organized in Year 2 in collaboration with INRAN.

To support learning around specific livestock value chains in an effort to provide tailored and relevant assistance to livestock and poultry producers, *Sawki* has identified 65 local livestock and 48 poultry producers who agree to participate in pilot activities as well as up to 15 “producer students” for each producer, for a total of 113 local producer pilot groups (24 of these groups are in Guidan Roudji, Maradi (11 for small ruminants and 13 for poultry production) and 89 in Mirriah, Zinder (54 in small ruminants and 35 in poultry)). Groups will be trained in appropriate herd management techniques that include improved animal health and production and feeding practices.

As of September 30, 2013, Livestock Value Chain Coordinators (LVVC) were identified in the three communes of Guidan Roudji and Dakoro (Maradi region) and five communes of the Department of Mirriah (Zinder region), each with a choice for either ruminants or poultry. The LVVC groups are composed of producers and pilot trainees with no more than seven members per village. In total there are 441 Livestock Value Chain Coordinators identified (154 of these groups are in all three communes of Maradi (116 for small ruminants and 38 for poultry production) and 287 in Mirriah, Zinder (155 in small ruminants and 132 in poultry)), including the 113 local pilot producer group members working on pilot livestock activities (above).

In Year 1, 70 pilot herds for ruminants and 48 pilot poultry flocks have already been identified in the commune of Guidan Roudji (Maradi) and five in the Department of Mirriah, Zinder. A similar identification and selection process is underway in the two communes of the Department of Dakoro, Maradi. Each herd will be managed by a pilot producer, focusing on herd management, including animal feeding practice, animal health, animal reproduction, animal production (milk, meat, eggs), animal breeding, herd management, herd housing, hygiene and sanitation. The monitoring of key production parameters⁴ of pilot herds will be implemented in collaboration with the Department of Livestock and with support from INRAN. In order to improve animal feed, the program provides a technical and technological package comprising: i) the cultivation of green fodder (alfalfa, bourgou and cowpeas for animal feed) in the dry season and through an irrigation system, ii) treatment of dry fodder with urea.

Contributing to Improved Input Supply Chains – This activity will take place in Year 2.

IR 2.3: Household incomes increased

Community productive assets development – Sawki has identified two key value chains that show competitive advantages and a strong contribution to nutrition and food security: cowpeas and small ruminants. These value chains were identified based on analysis of interviews with producer communities, government technical services and other food security programs in the intervention area (e.g. Projet d'Appui à la Sécurité Alimentaire dans le Département de Maradi). Work on these value chains will start in Year 2.

Increasing Producers' Commercial Capacity – Sawki began assessing training needs in financial management and business development and mapping small businesses' linkages with financial institutions and farmers' access to financial services. Trainings and other elements of this activity will commence in Year 2.

⁴ Birth, growth, weight gain of animal fattening, milk, eggs

Cross-Cutting IR: Household and community resilience to shocks improved through community development and good governance

The following activities under this cross-cutting IR are planned to commence in December 2013 (Year 2/ FY2014): *Reinforcing Community-Based Early Warning Systems (EWS)* and *Building the capacity of local government and community structures to mitigate the impacts of drought*.

Cross-Cutting Theme: Gender

1) Gender Training for *Lahia* and *Sawki* program staff: A three-day introductory course on gender was designed to help *Sawki* and *Lahia* DFAP teams jointly review, understand and articulate their personal feelings and beliefs about gender. It is important for staff members to examine their own feelings about the concept before interacting with community members on this issue. Open discussions and exercises allowed participants to challenge their preconceived notions about gender norms and analyze the effects of social exclusion on some members of the society. In addition to a better understanding of the gender concept, staff also learned to integrate gender into the program.

2) Establishment of safe spaces for adolescent girls: For this previously described activity (please see page 5), the *Sawki* program is building off of a traditional Nigerien practice of mentoring. It is customary in the target villages for adolescent girls to have a mentor (older adolescent girls and women 15 to 45 years of age, generally married). *Sawki* is working with these mentors (on average four per village), training them on how to facilitate safe spaces and discuss reproductive health and other issues of importance to adolescents.

The first workshop took place in September with 78 mentors with an age between 15 and 45 were trained with the support of the Nike Foundation, which helped develop the training module and deployed a consultant to assist with the training. By the end of September 2013, there were on average two safe spaces supervised by four mentors per Year 1 village. In total there are 114 mentors for 53 safe spaces.

3) Developing Ecoles des Maris: The Ecole des Maris approach was developed by UNFPA in Niger to improve men's involvement in the management of reproductive health issues. The *Sawki* team is preparing to use this approach to secure greater engagement of men on issues of gender equity and equality. In addition to reproductive health, male involvement will be sought in particular on ways to help women access land, participation in decision-making at the household level, and in identifying solutions to early marriages. The program plans to establish one Ecole des Maris per village.

Results and Accomplishments during Year 1 / FY2013: Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

To set up a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system, *Sawki* participated early in Year 1 in two FFP and FANTA-sponsored workshops to help set up the DFAP baseline, and revise and harmonize the program's indicators with other DFAPs in Niger. Further refinements have

continued throughout the year, to integrate the gender and environmental monitoring aspects in the program, in particular. Nonetheless, baseline results arrived just before submission of the ARR and targets for impact indicators could be set based on baseline values.

The FFP Annual Monitoring Workshop also took place in Washington, D.C. in July 2013 to discuss, among other topics, the annual indicators of the DFAPs and their monitoring. Sawki was represented by three M&E staff from the three members of the consortium and one Mercy Corps M&E staff based in Washington DC. Four indicators related to value chain program components were selected to be included in the IPTT. These indicators are:

- Number of farmers and others who have applied new technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance
- Number of hectares under improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance
- Gross margin per unit of land, animal or cage of selected product (crops/animals/fisheries selected varies by country)
- Value of incremental sales (collected at farm- level) attributed to USG implementation

Sawki subsequently revised its IPTT to include the four indicators.

M&E Plan

Sawki organized an internal workshop for all program components to discuss M&E procedures, monitoring of program activities and the various forms and questionnaires to be used for data collection. The workshop helped fine tune the PMP and also clarify the rationale behind each indicator. The targets for each indicator have been discussed as well.

Rapid Rural Appraisal in the communities

The *Sawki* team and representatives of the GoN (Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Health, Environment and Community Development) led series of rapid rural appraisals (RRA) in the intervention areas to discuss determine and prioritize with each community the activities to be implemented. The RRAs used a focus group approach including adult men and women and male and female adolescents. The RRAs helped determine communities' needs and constraints as they relate to health, agriculture and livestock, and the environment, and determine viable solutions to the problems identified as crucial. This exercise helped identify the main productive activities to be implemented in each community and the community action plans were validated in front of local administrative and village authorities. Following the RRA, all activities to be implemented in a given community have been agreed upon between *Sawki* and the communities.

Results and Accomplishments during Year 1 / FY2013: Commodities and Operations

Coordination with other DFAPs/programs: During this implementation year, before initiating any activities, *Sawki* conducted a stakeholder mapping and mapped developed technologies to avoid duplication. To ensure proper alignment, the program has ensured full involvement of municipal and administrative authorities. The program also participated in all meetings initiated in the area of intervention, such as the national and regional clusters for nutrition and food security.

Sawki also participated in regular meetings with other Niger DFAPs, where common issues and areas of collaboration were addressed. One such issue is that of monetization challenges faced by

all three DFAPs, the issuance of common monetization tenders, etc., which helped cut costs and avoid unproductive competition between the three programs. Designing a common Scope of Work for a joint Gender Assessment is another example of the collaboration between the three DFAPs.

Distribution Commodities:

1. Commodities management: Port operations for direct distribution commodities were removed from Africare's responsibility and transferred to Mercy Corps at the beginning of the program. Mercy Corps is therefore directly responsible for the management of all commodities from the time they are offloaded at port to their distribution points in Maradi and Zinder. The two shipments for the first call forward of FY2012 and the second shipment of the first call forward of FY2013 have been received. The shipment for the first call forward for Year 2 is being handled for an arrival in November 2013.
2. Partnership established with World Vision International for the use of Last Mile Mobile Solution⁵ in *Sawki's* direct distribution activities. The Canadian International Development Agency is subsidizing the dissemination of the platform through a total package worth more than \$20,000 (software, hardware, capacity building) through April 2014. The hardware has been delivered to *Sawki* and a training conducted by World Vision is planned to take place in November 2013.

Monetization:

In Year 1, *Sawki* had planned on monetizing a total of 2,560 MT of American milled rice. Per FFP request, only 2,000 MT were called forward, with the balance 'put on hold', for an expected replacement with CDF resources. In Year 1, *Sawki* therefore tendered 2,000 MT of American milled rice (15% broken). Africare conducted the monetization for Mercy Corps⁶. The tender was advertised in local newspapers and on Nigerien radio. In the presence of GoN officials, the three consortia representatives opened bids in January 2013.

The bid opening of the January 2013 tender offered an acceptable price of 375,000 FCFA per MT. The three top buyers were offered to buy two lots each, but all failed to secure bank guarantees. In the end, Jai Mata Di bought 1,000 MT and ETS Bague Daouda another 40 MT. The proceeds were transferred to Mercy Corps' monetization account by Africare (and likewise to Save the Children). The remaining 1,301 MT of rice were retendered on February 25, 2013, and the bids opened on March 20, 2013 (along with 659 MT for Save the Children). The potential buyer retained after the bids were opened, ETS Manomi, confirmed in writing his intention to buy 1000 MT of rice at 355,000 FCFA/MT immediately following the bid opening. However, Africare reported on June 7, 2013 that the sudden drop in price of rice on the Nigerien market made all potential buyers back down from their previous decisions to buy part or all the remaining rice. At that time, Africare retendered the remaining commodities with a target of July 20, 2013 to finalize a contract and receive down-payment from one or more buyers. With the tender not yielding satisfactory results, and with USAID/FFP approval, *Sawki* completed a negotiated sale for the balance of the commodities. The remaining quantity was sold at the price

⁵ LMMS is a stand-alone system that uses web-based mobile applications to better manage responses to disasters. <http://www.lastmilemobilesolutions.com/>. *Sawki* will be using LMMS in partnership with World Vision International.

⁶ Africare also acted as the monetization agent for Save the Children's DFAP, and tendered 1000 MT for CRS's DFAP.

of 320,000 CFA/MT, to two Nigerien rice wholesalers (Etablissement Bague Daouda and Adoua Import-Export). The former bought 300 MT and the latter 1,650 MT. While most of the proceeds have been paid by the buyers by the end of September 2013, the funds are currently in a holding account and have not yet been transferred to Mercy Corps.

Another challenge with the monetization has been that of the discharge, in Lome, Togo, of torn bags for all three Niger DFAPs. Following several misunderstandings, it appears CRS collected all the torn/slack bags and had to recondition them. CRS is seeking compensation/reimbursement from *Sawki* for a portion of the bags. Discussions are ongoing, at the end of September 2013, on cost and quantities to reimburse.

NB: As the sales occurred over a period of several months, exchange rate fluctuations have been averaged by monetization agent Africare to 503.42FCFA to the US\$. This exchange rate was used in the ARR Cost Recovery and Monetization table information. However, in other sections of this ARR, Mercy Corps uses a rate of 487FCA to the US\$ per our exchange policy. The discrepancies in terms of monetization proceeds emanates from these different exchange rates.

Other Operational Issues:

- Finalization of EMMP and IEE revision to account for BEO recommendations. The revised IEE and EMMP and PERSUAP for warehousing activities were approved by USAID with conditions. These conditions – as clarified with BEO in Washington, D.C. in October 2013, will be addressed by *Sawki* during implementation. In particular, all mitigation measures included in the IEE will be reported on in due course: activities implemented so far are activities with categorical exclusions. Also, a PERSUAP will be submitted in Year 2 to address safe use of pesticides by farmers. Finally, *Sawki* will work with communities to find sustainable ways to reduce the negative impacts of agricultural expansion, overgrazing and fuel wood use.
- Despite the challenge in identifying qualified personnel willing to relocate to Maradi and Zinder, which contributed to delays in planned activities under SO1 in Year 1, *Sawki* was able to secure all essential staff. By September 30, 2013, a full team is in place.
- Finalization and approval by FFP of the *Sawki* branding strategy and marking plan, with new logo design took place in Year 1.

B. Success Stories

As program activities only began in the third quarter of the implementation year, we regret to not have success stories to report at this time. We look forward to reporting these in subsequent Annual Reports.

C. Lessons Learned

Though the program remains relatively new, *Sawki* has encountered a number of challenges, some of which – most notably with monetization – have been previously addressed in this report. The following lessons can be learned by Mercy Corps and FFP for the planning and set up of similar programs.

- ✓ Plan for faster baseline and for Year 1 activities to be trainings and other ‘soft skills’ that can be implemented directly following the baseline activities.
- ✓ Clarify expectations with all partners early on to avoid delays in signing agreements, including with GoN ministries.
- ✓ Consider and budget for incentives to attract and retain talented team members to remote regions of Niger.